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Toward the Understanding of Jesus

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Toward the Understanding of Jesus

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PREFACE

THE present study was first published with two other historical essays in 1921 under the title, "Toward the Understanding of Jesus and Other Historical Studies."

The background of the teachings of Christ are naturally of greater interest to the reading public than researches on the fall of Rome or the agrarian conditions of mediæval Europe. It is therefore deemed advisable by the publishers to issue "Toward the Understanding of Jesus" separately and thus meet the demand of a wider public.

In the preface of the original edition I tried to make it quite clear that this study is not a contribution to so-called higher criticism but rather to historical understanding. To explain the purpose of this little book therefore I venture to quote from the preface of the original edition—"The first study deals with the historical problem presented by the teachings of Jesus. The problem is—why such unprecedented teachings at *that particular time?* This study, therefore, deals, if you please, with the 'fullness of time.' To the scientific historian everything that has happened happened in the 'fullness of time' and to understand intimately and realistically that 'fullness' is the task of history. In this particular study, therefore, we are endeavoring

to understand the particular circumstances and conditions that make so great an historical event as the insight of Jesus historically intelligible to us.

"In dealing with the gospel texts I have not attempted to utilize critical literature. Text-criticism to my way of thinking already presupposes a clear-cut understanding of the controlling factors in the historical situation."

To this former preface I have nothing to add except thanks to my readers for a far greater measure of appreciation and interest in my work than I had ventured to expect.

VLADIMIR G. SIMKHOVITCH.

Columbia University,
April, 1923.

Toward the Understanding of Jesus

TOWARD THE UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS

CHAPTER I

THE teachings of Christ are an historical event. Let us try to understand them historically. Without an historical understanding we have before us not teachings but texts. There is hardly a text in the four gospels that is not apparently conflicting with other texts. Yet an insight is won when the teachings of Jesus are viewed and understood historically.

The test of true understanding is to see in seeming contradictions but differing aspects of the same fundamental forces, to perceive in the endless expressions of life but one flow of life and to trace that flow to its sources. The test of true understanding is an understanding free from contradictions. So long as we find contradictions it is certain that what we hold in our hands are fragments; and though we may try to arrange them logically, the complete sphere of Jesus' own life and the life he preached we do not understand.

The gospels themselves contain practically nothing that throws light on Jesus' life as a whole. Little is

to be found about his life and development before his ministry. Yet it is clear that when he entered upon his ministry he felt called to do so, and it is clear that such a mission develops slowly. What do we know of the long years while Jesus was thinking and feeling and praying, the years while the life was ripening which he afterwards preached and finally sacrificed? Under what circumstances he was developing, what he was doing, what influences impressed themselves upon his life and thought before he was thirty—what do we know about it? Nothing! The episode from Jesus' childhood, when he remained in the temple listening and asking questions of the learned men there, only emphasizes our lack of knowledge. For if Jesus in his childhood was so eager and mentally so keen, what was his mind doing during the eighteen or twenty years which followed that episode? Luke tells us "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." [1] That is all we know about the growth and development of Jesus' life and mind. Was his inner life dormant or non-existent all these years? Did he not grow at all? Had his ideas no sources whatsoever, no development of any kind; were they utterly uncorrelated with the lives of his fellow men? What was Jesus, a phantom abstractly existing in a vacuum, or a historical personality really living and suffering in a given time and place?

There can be but one relevant answer to the question: Jesus was a historical personality. We all live and die and most of us are forgotten. Personalities

[1] Luke 2: 52.

who are remembered, whom written records of human existence cannot overlook and our memory cannot forget, are personalities whose individual lives greatly affected many lives. A personality in other words acquires historical importance when it deals with the many, when its ideas, actions, words are understood by the many, affect the many. If a multitude gathers around one, it means that what the one is teaching is of interest to so many individuals that they form a multitude around him.

The more limited is our knowledge of the one, the more important is the light that may be shed by the many. The many seldom present difficult problems, for it is never very difficult to find out what in a given situation they had in common. What were their common conditions of existence, what were their common hopes, what were their fears, interests, purposes? Once we find that out, the reactions of the many are not difficult to understand. The particular historical conditions under which Jesus developed, lived, ministered and died are bound to help us understand his life and hence his teachings more intimately. How the Greeks or the Romans, the Gauls, the Goths or the Slavs at various times conceived and pictured to themselves Jesus and his teachings is an interesting problem in itself. It is the history of Christianity, it is the story of Jesus in the course of human history. The history of these interpretations of Jesus is a history of assimilations, in a sense a history of mankind. But it is not the history of mankind that interests us here. These interpretations can only confuse us. Nor

are we interested in a composite picture of Jesus in history throughout the ages of faith. What we are searching for is that definite, concrete, historical Jesus who can give coherence to his teachings. Our quest is the historical truth. Let us therefore go to the documents; but let us be clear in our mind as to their value.

For historical truth is not a bundle of documents. Documents are the raw material, but not the structure. Historical truth is such a constructive insight into a given situation as to carry with it conviction of real life. Social life is then moving within its conditions of existence; and personalities, in their words and deeds, are correlated with their fellow men and appear in their historical, that is, their representative capacity.

CHAPTER II

In the year seventy after Christ the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, Jerusalem was sacked, and the population either slain, crucified or sold into slavery. It is estimated that over a million and two hundred thousand perished. Josephus tells us about the destruction of Jerusalem that "the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world." [1]

The conventional history usually begins this war on August sixth of the year 66, when the Romans and other Gentiles were massacred by the Jews of Jerusalem. This date is so artificial that Mommsen for instance suggests A. D. 44 as the year from which the Jewish-Roman war might better be dated.

It has been customary to put the outbreak of the war in the year 66; with equal and perhaps better warrant we might name for it the year 44. Since the death of Agrippa, warfare in Judea had never ceased, and alongside of the local feuds, which Jews fought with Jews, there went on constantly the war of Roman troops against the seceders in the mountains, the Zealots, as the Jews named them, or, according to Roman designation, the Robbers.[2]

[1] Josephus: Jewish Wars, VI, 9, 4.
[2] Mommsen: The Provinces of the Roman Empire, v. 2, p. 221-222. (New York, 1887.)

But to date the beginning of the revolt against Rome with the death of Agrippa in the year 44 is also quite arbitrary. For the revolt had been brewing and repeatedly breaking out here and there long before that. If we should follow the opinion of a contemporary historian, Josephus, we should have to date the beginnings back to the revolt of Judas, the Galilean, or Judas, the Gaulonite, to whose revolutionary activities and doctrines Josephus attributes all the ensuing misfortunes of the Jewish nation, which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. The occasion of that uprising was the census of Quirinius for taxation purposes in the year 6 A. D. Josephus tells us that one Judas, the Gaulonite, with a Pharisee named Saddouk, urged the Jews to revolt, both preaching that "this taxation was no better than an introduction of slavery, and exhorting the nation to assert its liberty." Josephus proceeds to inform us about these men and their doctrine:

All sorts of misfortunes sprung from these men, and the nation was infected with this doctrine to an incredible degree; one violent war came upon us after another . . . . the sedition at last so increased that the very temple of God was burnt down by their enemies' fire.[1]

Toward the end of the same chapter he gives us some information about the so-called philosophy of Judas, the Gaulonite or the Galilean, as well as of his followers.

These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that

[1] Josephus: Antiquities, XVIII, 1, 1.

God is to be their only Lord and Master. They also do not mind dying any death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor could the fear of death make them call any man their master. And since this immutable resolution of theirs is well known to a great many, I shall speak no further about that matter; nor am I afraid that anything I have said of them should be disbelieved, rather do I fear that what I have said does not adequately express the determination that they show when they undergo pain.[1]

As a matter of fact the Jewish struggle for independence and the Zealot movement did not begin even with Judas the Gaulonite. Judas himself only continued the work of his father, Ezechias of Galilee,[2] who with his very large following was killed by young Herod when the latter was only the captain, στρατηγός, of Galilee under Hyrcanus, the ethnarch of Judea. That was in the year 46 B. C. Even then the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem must have had strong sympathies with Ezechias, for Herod was accused before that body for killing Ezechias and his followers, and he would have fared badly had not Sextus Cæsar, the Roman governor of Syria, requested from Hyrcanus Herod's acquittal.[3]

Nor does the rebellion of the Jews begin with Ezechias. The rebellion of the Jews against Rome rather begins with the power of Rome over the Jews; and in the same degree as the Roman power over the Jews increased, did the political reaction against that power, the revolution against Rome, increase and

[1] Josephus: Antiquities, XVIII, 1, 6.
[2] Schürer: Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi, v. 1, p. 420. (4th ed., Leipzig, 1901).
[3] Josephus: Antiq., XIV, 9, 3-5. Jewish Wars, I, 10, 6-9.

spread. The Jewish revolutionists against Rome were called by the Romans bandits or robbers. Later they were called *scitarii,* "men with knives." The polite Josephus followed the Romans in calling them robbers; but whenever he tells us about the constant warfare, about either the Romans' or Herod's exploits against the robbers, it becomes clear that they are religious patriots who are fighting and dying for their country. So, for instance, Josephus describes one of Herod's expeditions against some Galilean robbers:

> Now these men slew the robbers and their families . . . and as Herod was desirous of saving some of them, he issued a proclamation to them . . . but not one of them came willingly to him, and those that were compelled to come preferred death to captivity. . . . And here a certain old man, the father of seven children . . . slew his children one after another. . . . Herod was near enough to see this sight and compassion moved him, and he stretched out his right hand to the old man and besought him to spare his children; yet did he not relent at all upon what he said, but reproached Herod on the lowliness of his descent, and slew his wife as well as his children; and when he had thrown their dead bodies down the precipice, he at last threw himself down after them.[1]

It is obvious here that we are dealing not with mercenary bandits, but with political and religious devotees who prefer death to submission. The Zealot movement, judging from Josephus's narrative, is of much older date than the revolt of Judas the Gaulonite, but that particular Galilean's uprising must have especially impressed itself upon the memory of men, for it is mentioned by way of illustration or characterization even in the Acts.

> After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing [*i.e.,* the enrolment] and drew away much people after him: he

[1] Josephus: Jewish Wars, I, 16, 4.

also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.[1]

Still more important the outbreak becomes when we consider what happened at the same time. For it was this very Census of Quirinius and this very enrolment which, according to Luke, brought Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Mary gave birth to Jesus.[2] The chronology and details of Luke's narrative present many puzzles, important no doubt to the historian of dates and places, but not relevant in a history of ideas. The slight chronological discrepancies here we may overlook. For after all so far as influence and ideas are concerned, it does not matter whether the uprisings of Judas took place in the year 1 or in the year 7 after the birth of Christ. Certain it is that the great events under the shadow of which Jesus spent his childhood were memories of Herod's bloody rule, the annexation of Judea to the Roman province of Syria, and the revolt against Rome of Judas of Galilee.

The importance of Judas's uprising is attested to us by Josephus. The ideas for which Judas stood did not die with him, but were spreading and increasing till all of Judea and Galilee were in a veritable conflagration. Is it reasonable to suppose that Jesus paid no attention to what was going on around him? Is it reasonable to suppose that the souls of his fellow men, their ideas and ideals could be a matter of indifference to him?

You must remember that if there was a difference

[1] Acts 5:37.
[2] Luke 2:1-6.

between the Pharisees and the Zealots it was only in the method and the degree of their antagonism to Rome. The immediate followers of Judas grasped the sword as their answer to Roman taxation. But all the Jews in Jerusalem and throughout Judea resented the idea of paying tribute. Josephus tells us that they took the report of taxation "heinously," and that it took a great deal of persuasion on the part of the high priest Joazar to make them submit to the taxation.[1] It is clear, however, that the difference in attitude between the Zealots and the Pharisees was that the former resisted with the drawn sword, while the submission of the latter was but passive resistance, with a heart full of resentment but with an arm too feeble or a mind too cautious to grasp the sword. Hence the Pharisaic question, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?"[2] The inquirer knew as well as Jesus how unpopular the answer Yes would be with a Jewish audience. Jesus answered, however, in the affirmative, pointing out that they have lost their independence, that on their tribute coin is the image of Cæsar. Hence there is nothing left but to "render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's."[3]

In the year 6 Judea was annexed to Syria; in the year 70 Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed. Between these two dates Jesus preached and was crucified on Golgotha. During all that time the life of the little nation was a terrific drama; its patriotic emotions were aroused to the highest pitch and then still more

[1] Josephus: Antiquities, XVIII, 1, 1.
[2] Matthew 22:17.
[3] *Ibid.*

inflamed by the identification of national politics with a national religion. Is it reasonable to assume that what was going on before Jesus' eyes was a closed book, that the agonizing problems of his people were a matter of indifference to him, that he had given them no consideration, that he was not taking a definite attitude towards the great and all-absorbing problem of the very people whom he taught?

In this setting, the Jewish nationalist could not separate religion from patriotism. Roman taxation, for instance, is certainly a purely political question, but Judas made a religious issue of it; and the Pharisaic interrogator of Jesus asked whether it was "lawful," that is, religiously permissible. Jesus therefore could not meditate about the religious problems of the people to whom he ministered without giving consideration to their engrossing political problem. That he had profoundly considered the problems of his day and wondered what the future contained for his people is shown by his reproach to the Pharisees:

> The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. But he answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering. O, ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?[1]

[1] Matthew 16:1-3.

CHAPTER III

CALLED upon to examine the origin and causes of the spreading resentment, of the fermenting revolution against Rome's rule, one curious circumstance is bound to attract our attention. This circumstance is that the Jews themselves petitioned Rome for Judea's annexation to the Roman province of Syria. Rome, on the other hand, did not grant the petition immediately. Only after years of Archelaus's misrule in Jerusalem was he finally deposed and Judea annexed in 6 A. D. Of course there were good reasons for the Jewish petition; the immediate concrete situation must have suggested precisely such action both on the part of Judea and on the part of Rome. But behind the immediate situation a vista is opened on the character and quality of Jewish political independence.

The events themselves are simple enough; judged by themselves they are insignificant; but valued psychologically, viewed as indications, what a light they throw upon Jewish nationalism and anationalism, upon Jewish political life with its dreams, its aspirations, its struggles and its fate. One has only to glance at the position of the heirs of Herod before Cæsar's throne; one has only to listen to the petitions and supplications of Herod's heirs and of the Judean ambassadors to realize that the political doom has long ceased to be a specter and a threat, but has been accepted by the

Jewish statesmen as an actual *status quo,* as a matter of fact, whether the plain people realize it in their every-day life or not.

Thus it seems that in their petitions they were haggling over minor terms and comforts; only details of submission appear to have worried them. In reality they were trying to save their culture and their religion. But why did the Jewish ambassadors demand provincial annexation? Why did eight thousand Jewish residents in Rome second Jerusalem's petition? Did they not prefer to be at least nominally independent? Fifty Jewish ambassadors were prostrated before the throne of Cæsar begging for annexation; the entire Jewish population of Rome was supporting these ambassadors and opposing the claims of Herod's heirs. Where then was Jewish patriotism, where the exclusive nationalism, clothed in all-consuming religious fervor? Fifty ambassadors were not likely to represent one particular clique; the entire Jewish populace in Rome could not be moved by considerations of sheer expediency. On questions of reason, feasibility, and expediency we divide; only on the most elemental emotions are we united. Hence their petition could not possibly have gone against those essentials which then constituted Jews as Jews; it could not go contrary to their religion and their nationalism.

Indeed it did not. Their supplications were dictated by austere and conservative religious nationalism. It was not for minor comforts they were bargaining. Rather did they feel that where the question at issue

was between so-called political independence and religion, then indeed it was their religion, as they understood it, their Jewish culture that they could not possibly sacrifice. It was in reality a phase of the nationalistic struggle, although it took the curious form of a petition for annexation. If they should be managed by a Roman procurator, they hoped for complete cultural autonomy, and they expected to manage their own local affairs. Ruled by a Herodian prince, they were quite helpless to do so; for the Herodians, while nominally Jews, were striving hard to be culturally Romans. Naturally enough the cultural aspiration of their entire *entourage* was also Roman and anational; and this anationalism was insidious and widespread, especially in upper-class circles.

The Jews' petition for annexation was therefore to be an exchange of their sham political independence for very real cultural autonomy. In other words, complete independence looked to the more enlightened part of the population like a forlorn hope; and the struggle was waged for a home rule that would not infringe upon religious traditions. Statesmen they may perhaps have been, to follow these tactics; but they were certainly not philosophers. They did not realize that the growing religious and cultural conservatism and nationalism were an ideological expression of their political unrest; were but the spiritual flavor of their national and political struggle for independence. They did not realize that their religious culture and their political nationalism were so intimately tied up together that they could be served only

by the sword. Hence it was most unlikely that cultural autonomy could really accept and adjust itself to the political downfall and the annexation as a province for which they were petitioning. Besides, so far as Rome was concerned, there was but one practical alternative. A Herodian government under Rome, offering no resistance to Rome, was precarious and undermining. It was tantamount to a complete cultural surrender.

Among the abuses of Herod, which the ambassadors quoted as reason for annexation, is the frank statement, that

> Herod did not abstain from making many innovations, according to his own inclinations. . . . That he never stopped adorning the cities that lay in their neighborhood, but that the cities belonging to his own government were ruined and utterly destroyed.[1]

Just how was Herod adorning the cities of the Gentiles? It is not uninteresting or unimportant. In Samaria Herod built

> a very large temple to Cæsar, and had laid round about it . . . the city Sebaste, from Sebastus or Augustus.

With similar temples to Cæsar he filled Judea, and when in honor of Cæsar

> he had filled his own country with temples, he poured out the like plentiful marks of his esteem into his province, and built many cities which he called *Cesareas*.[2]

In one of these Cesareas Herod also erected an

> amphitheater, and theater, and market-place, in a manner agreeable to that denomination; and appointed games every fifth year

[1] Josephus: Antiquities, XVIII, 2, 2.
[2] Josephus: Jewish Wars, I, 21, 2-4.

and called them . . . Cæsar's games, and he himself proposed the largest prizes upon the hundred and ninety-second Olympiad.[1]

Herod went farther still in emphasizing his adherence to so-called Greco-Roman culture. He built amphitheaters in Tripoli, Damascus and Ptolomeis, *agoras* at Berytus and Tyre, theaters in Sidon and Damascus.

And when Apollo's temple had been burned down, he rebuilt it at his own expense. . . . What need I speak of the presents he made to the Lycians and Samnians? or of his great liberality through all Ionia? . . . And are not the Athenians and Lacedemonians, the Nicopolitans and that Pergamus which is in Mysia, full of donations that Herod presented them with? [2]

As Herod's most splendid gift Josephus regards the endowment of the Olympic games, which were suffering much from lack of funds.

What favors he bestowed on the Eleans was a donation not only in common to all Greece, but to all the habitable earth as far as the glory of the Olympic games reached.[3]

As a matter of fact Herod even took part in these games himself.

These activities of Herod are obviously too strenuous, too consistent to be casual. Inwardly anything but a Roman gentleman, he took the world-culture, Hellenism, for his ideal, and made outward assimilation to that culture his ardent endeavor. He was far from being a unique specimen in Judea. Many felt as he did, but they belonged to the upper classes and were certainly a small minority. The bulk of the popu-

[1] Josephus: Jewish Wars, I, 21, 8.
[2] Josephus: Jewish Wars, I, 21, 11.
[3] Josephus: Jewish Wars, I, 21, 12.

lation resented and resisted the Greco-Roman culture; they resisted it religiously as sacrilege and nationalistically as treason.

It was a tangible incident of precisely such nature which led to the break, to a revolt and a petition for annexation.

Josephus reports the speech which Herod made to the people of Jerusalem when he was about to rebuild their temple. He told them what made his undertaking possible:

> I have had peace a long time, and have gained great riches and large revenues, and, *what is the principal thing of all,* I am at amity with and well regarded by the Romans, *who, if I may say so, are the rulers of the whole world.*[1]

Subordination to Rome, however, was emphasized in more than speeches. The very temple of Jerusalem was to bear witness thereto. A large Roman eagle made out of gold at vast expense was erected over the principal gate of the temple. Since any kind of image was forbidden to Jews by the law and the prophets, that Roman eagle was not exactly cherished. Resistance against Herod just then was useless. When Herod's health began to fail, however, the Jews started an agitation to remove from the temple the eagle which in their eyes was both a sacrilege and a national insult. The leaders of the movement were the most eloquent two Jews of their time: Judas, the son of Saripheus, and Matthias, the son of Margalothus, both teachers of the law. They realized that Herod would punish their deed with death. But they

[1] Josephus: Antiquities, XV, 2, 1.

felt that those who die for such a deed "will die for the preservation and observation of the law of their fathers and will also acquire everlasting fame and commendation." [1] The eagle was pulled down and cut to pieces by a number of young men under the leadership of this Matthias and Judas, and Herod ordered all of them to be burned alive.[2]

These men were honored by the Jews as martyrs. When in the course of time Herod died and Archelaus succeeded him, Archelaus, pending Rome's confirmation of his succession, was very anxious to please the people and avoid annexation. The people demanded lower taxes, lower duties on commodities, freedom for prisoners. All these demands Archelaus gladly granted. But then the people began to mourn the rebels whom Herod had burned. Let us quote Josephus again:

> They lamented those that were put to death by Herod, because they had cut down the golden eagle that had been over the gate of the temple. Nor was this mourning of a private nature, but the lamentations were very great, the mourning solemn, and the weeping such as was loudly heard over all the city, as being for those men who had perished for the laws of their country and for the temple. They cried out that a punishment ought to be inflicted for these men upon those that were honored by Herod.[3]

Not being able to appease the multitudes, Archelaus resorted to force. About three thousand Jews were slaughtered by his soldiers. It was this incident which led to a general uprising and an intervention of the

[1] Josephus: Antiquities, XVII, 6, 2.
[2] Josephus: Antiquities, XVII, 6, 3-4.
[3] Josephus: Jewish Wars, II, 1, 2.

Roman forces, and to the deputation from Jerusalem which petitioned annexation.

Should an impression be gained that the Herodians were responsible for Hellenizing the people and Romanizing the commonwealth, this impression is completely out of focus and erroneous. The Herodians themselves were pawns in the game, mere incidents that may serve as illustrations. The Hellenistic tendency, the tendency toward world culture and toward a Judaic anationalism filled the pages of Jewish history, not only long before the Herodian dynasty, but even long before the Hasmonean ascendency. In fact it was the popular and religious reaction to that very tendency that culminated in the Maccabean struggles.

The prelude to the Maccabean struggles introduces us to an educated upper class, Hellenized and Hellenizing, and to an opposing party called "the pious" or "the Chassidim." It was not the Chassidim who had the upper hand. The government was in the hands of the Hellenistic party. The high priest was a certain Jason, who was hardly behind Herod in his "cultural" tendencies. He, too, sent many gifts to pagan festivals, such as the sacrificial festival of Hercules at the games in Tyre. He, too, erected a Greek gymnasium under the castle of Jerusalem; and the author of the Second Maccabees reports to us that he caused the noblest of the young men to dress like Greeks.

And thus there was an extreme of Greek fashions, and an advance of alien religion, by reason of the exceeding profaneness of Jason that ungodly man and no high priest; so that the priests

had no more any zeal for the services of the altar, but despising the sanctuary, and neglecting the sacrifices, they hastened to enjoy that which was unlawfully provided in the palaestra after the summons of the discus; making of no account the honors of their fathers, and thinking the glories of the Greeks the best of all.[1]

Hellenism was rapidly encroaching upon Judaism, and the Hellenistic party had full sway in Jerusalem. Frankly they were none too proud of being Jews. They conspired openly with Antiochus Epiphanes against those who held fast to the traditions, and encouraged him to accelerate the Hellenization and abbreviate its process. He prohibited the exercise of Jewish rites, on pain of torture and death; he forbade the Jews to remain Jews, to worship the God of their fathers, and by force compelled them to sacrifice to the gods of Olympus and of the Hellenic world.

When thus a war of extermination was waged by the Syrian king against the Jews; when no other alternative was left them but to sacrifice either their lives or their religion, then they arose determined to defend both in an unequal struggle. Under the leadership of Matthias and, after his death, of his son Judas, the Maccabee, the Jews inflicted severe punishment upon the generals of Antiochus. Wherever the victorious arms of the Maccabeans went, they swept before them all Hellenism and anationalism. The Maccabean family established themselves first as popular leaders and later as a theocratic dynasty of high priests and rulers of the people, the Hasmonean dynasty.

Such is the epitome of a phase of the struggle which lasted decades. Most of the details, of course, are

[1] II Maccabees 4:13-15.

of no interest to us. And yet there are pages in the history of these struggles which are important for later reference and which we should remember. First of all, Judas the Maccabee, whilst struggling against heathendom, is forced to seek an "alliance" with Rome.[1] For it became early enough quite clear that no amount of courage could avail the little nation in the long run against the superior strength of Syria. So we find Simon, the brother of Judas, who succeeded him in leadership, again sending ambassadors to Rome in 139 B. C., who brought with them rich gifts and sought the renewal of Judas' covenant of friendship. Thus already in the days of their struggle for independence from Syria the Jews were obliged to seek the protection of Rome. This same protection led not very much later to intervention and dependence.

Another detail that should be borne in mind is that Judas Maccabaeus, even in the days when fortune smiled upon him and victory accompanied his arms everywhere, could not undertake to secure Judaism in either Galilee or Gilead. There the Gentiles were so numerous and so strong that the early Maccabees did not even undertake to Judaize these provinces. The first book of Maccabees and Josephus [2] inform us that Judas went to Gilead with one army and sent his brother Simon with another army three thousand men strong into Galilee. After many battles against the heathen in Galilee and as many victories, Simon gathered all the Jews in Galilee with their households

[1] I Maccabees 8; Josephus: Antiquities, XII, 10, 6.
[2] I Maccabees 4:60-61. Josephus: Antiquities, XII, 7, 7.

and their goods and convoyed them amid great rejoicing to Judea where they could be secure.

One hundred and fifty years later, when Jesus lived among the people of Galilee, it was of course a different Galilee. Judaism was strong there and at times peculiarly intolerant of Roman domination, as the rebellion of Judas, the Gaulonite, or even that of his father proved. But there is also little doubt about the large Gentile population in Galilee, much larger than in any part of Judea proper. Where two races are living side by side with differing traditions and differing religions, two social phenomena can as a rule be observed: greater mutual understanding than elsewhere and greater tolerance under ordinary circumstances, for the strangers are not strange to them; but in times of excitement, greater antagonism, race hatred and general intolerance, for strangers are near at hand. Thus in Galilee, where Jews and Gentiles came in close contact, there was the basis for relations more antagonistic as well as more friendly. When the Jew was friendly he was likely to speculate and wonder whether after all his Heavenly Father were not the father of the Gentile fisherman and farmer as well. When, however, the Jew of Galilee was unfriendly, the very proximity and daily contact with the Gentile must have made him peculiarly jealous of Jewish independence. For Jewish independence meant Jewish ascendency in a mixed population, while Jewish dependence involved not only national degradation, but also particular and immediate personal degradation in the Jew's relative position to his Gentile neighbor.

Among the upper classes of Jerusalem, Philhellenism was probably never completely stamped out. It is well to remember that assimilation and admiration for foreign habits and ideas are much more likely to be found on the top than at the bottom of society; for what characterizes the lower and humbler strata is their traditionalism. Here is another detail of the Maccabean struggle that may serve as an illustration; for the very chronicles of Maccabees emphasize indirectly the fact that it was difficult to eradicate Hellenism. The first book tells us about Jonathan, the brother of Judas:

> The sword was now at rest in Israel, and Jonathan dwelt in Michmash; and he began to judge the people, and drove out the ungodly from Israel.[1]

The ungodly were of course the Jews with Hellenistic tendencies. Yet how difficult it was for him to drive out Philhellenes is shown by the fact that Jonathan had to live in Michmash. He lived in Michmash because Jerusalem was at the time in the hands of that very ungodly Hellenistic party.

True, soon enough Jerusalem was in the hands of the Maccabeans, but no sooner did the Hasmonean dynasty completely establish itself than it, too, began to follow the trend toward the world culture. Thus we find John Hyrcanus abandoning the Pharisees, the strictly orthodox party, and associating with the Sadducees. Neither the Pharisees nor the Sadducees were a sect with static dogmas, as text-books of theology are likely to present them to us. Rather do both sects represent potential tendencies and viewpoints. The

[1] I Maccabees, 9:73.

Pharisees accepted traditional interpretations of the law, for they were traditionalists. The Sadducees accepted the national and religious minimum; the law, but not the added traditions. They were the rich upper class; the populace were with the Pharisees.

> The Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them; but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side.[1]

The law itself, obviously could never be so culturally isolating as the law plus the entire body of sanctified traditions. The well-to-do liberals could easily be persuaded to drop the traditional additions and interpretations, but not so the populace. Neither was the populace in the habit of giving themselves Greek names. But all the sons of Hyrcanus have Greek names: Aristobulus, Antigonus, Alexander. To be sure, as a high priest Aristobulus had use for a Hebrew name as well, which happened to be Yehuda—Judas. This king, according to Josephus, either so favored Greek ideas that he was known as a lover of Hellenism, as a Philhellen, or actually adopted the title Philhellen.[2] Aristobulus's successor and brother, Alexander Jannaeus, even introduced bilingual coins with the two inscriptions in Greek and Hebrew, and incidentally adopted the title Melek—βαζιλευς.

All this tends to show that the Hellenistic tendency was not of Herodian making. It existed fully as strongly in the pre-Maccabean period; it was checked by the nationalistic and religious revolt of the Macca-

[1] Josephus: Antiquities, XIII, 19, 6.
Antiquities, XIII, [illegible] 3.

beans; it revived again under the Hasmonean dynasty. And as the little Jewish kingdom was becoming more and more a dependency of Rome, two tendencies were rapidly developing; that of submission to Rome and cultural assimilation among the upper class, and that of growing nationalism and religious orthodoxy. The nationalism and religious orthodoxy became one and indivisible, yet the accent was on the religion, for tradition was bound up with religion. Tradition was religious, and what else after all was nationality but the sum total of traditions?

Romanization threatened the very life of their tradition; it interfered with their religion. A Herodian prince ruling by the grace of Rome was sure to interfere much more than a Roman administrator. At least they thought so. They wanted independence; but if no independence was to be had, the next best thing was cultural home rule under a Sanhedrin of their own choosing, autonomy that would guarantee them their own religious traditions. Such autonomy was unthinkable under a Herodian prince. It was quite conceivable under a Roman governor. Hence their petition for annexation to Syria. Interesting it is that the vicissitudes of their national history, a long, long history that was dating back to their Babylonian captivity, taught the Jews to consider themselves primarily a religious entity; interesting it is that the Jews themselves were petitioning to be permitted to render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's for the sake of being free to give to their God what is God's.

CHAPTER IV

THE annexation of Judea to the province of Syria, in spite of the possibility which it offered of greater cultural autonomy, could neither solve the problem nor save the situation. Granting even that orthodoxy in Jerusalem had a freer hand under a Roman procurator than it could have had under a Herodian prince, that more tenacious orthodoxy was in itself but a reaction against the encroaching national doom. By annexation the national doom was being not averted but consummated. True enough, any Roman Pontius Pilate would have let the Jews have their own way in religious matters. He would have washed his hands of them, while a Herodian king would wash his hands in the blood of his Jewish adversaries. But what was nationalistic orthodoxy gaining? Subjectively and psychologically the Jews were losing, more irrevocably than ever.

Where cultural assimilation preceded political and territorial absorption by Rome, the final act was felt but little. The death of a nation was made easy. The process of assimilation involved in fact a cultural compromise. The Romans themselves were culturally proselytized by Greece, by Egypt, by Mithraism, even by Judaism. Assimilation involved to some extent an

exchange of cultural concepts. Jewish proselytism was but an incident of assimilation, not of Jewish nationalism. The Roman lady who became converted to Judaism and sent money to the temple remained a Roman lady. She might have chosen to worship Isis without becoming an Egyptian; she chose Jehovah without ceasing to be a Roman. Proselytism without national absorption was already a first step to assimilation, for it involved the denationalization of a national religion.

The process of Jewish assimilation was cut short in Judea by dramatic political events and the nationalistic reaction of the masses. The brutal aggression of Antiochus Epiphanes put an end to all assimilation and caused the Maccabean revolt. True enough, the cultivated and educated Jews realized quite well that they dealt with Rome, the ruler of the habitable earth. Whether a Herodian prince, or a Josephus, or a high priest like Joazar—any one of them knew what the Roman Empire was, knew that a conflict with that Empire could end in but one way. But the plain people knew only their traditional religion and glimpsed but vaguely the insuperable power of Rome.

Now that Rome was establishing herself firmly and frankly as Judea's avowed lord, the increased national feeling, the bitter national antagonism of the Jews was equally frank. The religion of their forefathers became the unfurled banner of a nation at bay. From now on, whether in passive resistance or in open rebellion, the only lord and master they recognized was the Lord of Hosts, the God of Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob, with whom they were in covenant, and who must send the great Deliverer to save his people in their hour of need.

Greater and greater became the pressure; greater and greater grew that need. Where was the Messiah? Would he come in the future? Oh, but there was no longer any future; it was then and there that he must come. Yea, to save his people he must have come already, must be among them, only unrecognized, unknown to them—Messiah, the anointed of God, the Christ.

Shall we now ask the question under what influences Jesus developed; what problems absorbed him before he began his ministry? Or is such a question superfluous? The central problem of his people was so enveloping that we can take for granted that Jesus' religious and intellectual life revolved around it, and that his own development consisted in the gradual solution of this very problem. To repeat, at the given time there was but one problem for the Jews—a single, all-absorbing national problem, that became under the circumstances *the* religious problem as well. It was the problem of existence, the problem of escape from certain annihilation.

One was the problem, but the solutions were several. Clearly the Jewish nationalists and the Herodians could not possibly agree upon the same solution. Even the religious nationalists of the time differed considerably. Yet in spite of all their differences as to method, their hope was the same. This hope was the national salvation, and their reliance was upon Messiah, the

Christ, the anointed King. Do you remember the song of Zacharias?

> Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant.[1]

Faith in the immediate national Deliverer was the great need. That faith, though it attached itself to God's own promises, indicated in the law and the prophets, really opened a flood-gate of new religious interpretations, and new religious beliefs. The law and the prophets were given and standardized; they contained no detailed information about the great need, the actual means of deliverance and salvation. Here was a free region for mystic, religious and political speculation. Such speculation could not be standardized. It was like a set of popular supplements to the existing religion. Being of immediate significance, offering solutions of the immediate great problem, the free supplements had great weight. Of course the law was observed and revered traditionally, but interest was centered on these popular additions to the canonic scriptures. In scrutinizing the future, they were reinterpreting the past. Attached to the traditional religion, they were yet inevitably modifying the very law. Not only were Messiah and his kingdom an immediate political necessity and therefore the center

[1] Luke 1:68-74.

of interest, but theologically they fulfilled God's own part in the covenant with his chosen people. The old law laid out all the paths of conduct for its people. It never undertook, however, to regulate the ways of God. Interest was now concentrated upon these very ways of God, a realm offering unlimited freedom to new vision, new insight, new interpretation.

Intellectual, political and spiritual life was heightened and intensified. That is characteristic of all critical periods. Do not let us assume that orthodoxy was weakened. Not at all. There was now room for deeply religious heterodoxy, but orthodoxy itself became much intensified. The tension bordered on hysteria; as is indicated in the eschatological literature of the time and by the prevalence of nervous maladies among the people in the days of Christ's ministry.

This great nervous strain was part of the crisis. It is precisely such a crisis that leads the many to the border of hysteria or to nervous anomalies of one kind or another, and that leads the few to the most extraordinary social, intellectual and moral achievements. There should be nothing mystical about the trite observation that every crisis produces its great men. The fact is that under ordinary conditions of existence, when we are quite sane and safe, we are using but a small fraction of our potential intellectual and emotional powers. It is precisely such social strain produced by a crisis that increases not our potential capacity, but the percentage of capacity at which we are actually working, thinking, feeling. Such a crisis, while greatly increasing numerically the broad base of the

intellectually and emotionally active members of society, quickens as well the activities of the individual, and further heightens the individual lives through their manifold interreactions. Greater achievement in both quantity and quality is almost inevitable. All dimensions are enlarged. Creative ability is enlarged; destructive folly is enlarged; all human activities, all elements of friction are increased for good and for evil; and the scale must be larger for the outstanding personalities who are to marshal the enlarged forces of life.

All dimensions being enlarged, single figures are not outstanding unless they are of heroic size. Hence they tower long afterwards over life's subsided flow, when humanity is again resting in routine existence from its mental strain or physical exhaustion. Conditions that call for intensified life with its ecstasy and hysteria, and its greater mental effort, are in their very nature inimical to all routine orthodoxy, political, religious or social. For orthodoxy is in its essence an established routine, and a crisis means exactly that the routine is endangered. Orthodoxy is the standardized organization, the delimitation of the flow of life at its low average level; it cannot hold within its banks the rushing freshets of a quickened life. Who in these troubled waters will undertake to discover where orthodoxy ends and heterodoxy begins?

The entire literature of the time is a fragmentary expression of this quickened life of the nation. The records of every Messianic hope contain a preamble somewhat similar to the especially well phrased pas-

sage in the Second Esdras, which, although written after Christ, expresses concisely the spirit of the constant Jewish question.

All this have I spoken before thee, O Lord, because thou hast said that for our sakes thou madest this world. As for the other nations, which also came from Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, and are like unto spittle: and thou hast likened the abundance of them unto a drop that falleth from a vessel. And now, O Lord, behold, these nations, which are reputed as nothing, be lords over us, and devour us. But we thy people, whom thou hast called thy firstborn, thy only begotten, and thy fervent lover, are given into their hands. If the world now be made for our sakes, why do we not possess for an inheritance our world? How long shall it endure?[1]

This in the main is the preface to the entire vast popular literature, political and prophetic, which covers a period of about three centuries, and of which but sample specimens survive. Conceived at different times under varying influences and conditions the character of the Messiah varied. A century or so before Christ Messianic quality was attributed to the early Maccabean leaders; a century after Christ the last great rebel leader Bar-Kochbah was viewed as the Messiah. Conceived under different oppressions, contemplated from different viewpoints, the scope and character of the Messianic kingdom differed widely. It will not be in keeping with our purpose to go through the entire gamut of tones and variations of salvation which this literature, in so far as it survives, offers us. It suffices that all this literature has one common pur-

[1] II Esdras 6, 55-59. The Apocrypha, Revised Version, 1894. See IV Esdras in Charles: Apocrypha and Pseudoepigrapha of the Old Testament, v. 2, p. 579.

pose: finally, somehow, it saves the Jew; the promises that it holds out to the Gentile world are less encouraging. Let us quote, for example, from the Assumption of Moses, written in all probability about A. D. 7-29. Like most of the Messianic literature it is replete with all kinds of heavenly signs, such supernatural signs as were demanded and made the criterion of Jesus's Christhood.

And the earth shall tremble; to its confines shall it be shaken: and the high mountains shall be made low and the hills shall be shaken and fall. And the horns of the sun shall be broken and he shall be turned into darkness; and the moon shall not give her light and the circle of the stars shall be disturbed. And the sea shall retire in the abyss, and the fountains of water shall fail and the rivers shall dry up. For the Most High will arise, the Eternal God alone, and he will appear to punish the Gentiles, and he will destroy all their idols. Then thou, O Israel, shalt be happy and thou shalt mount upon the neck and wings of the eagle,[1] and they shall be ended and God will exalt thee. . . . And thou shalt look from on high and see thy enemies in Gehenna and thou shalt recognize them and rejoice. And thou shalt give thanks and confess thy Creator.[2]

In the so-called Psalter of Solomon, written after Pompey's invasion of Judea somewhere between 63 and 48 B. C., the tenor is more or less the same, except that the hope is centered on a king of the House of David.

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David, at the time in which Thou seest, O God, that he may

[1] *I.e.*, triumph over Rome.

[2] The Assumption of Moses, 10, 4-10. R. H. Charles: The Apocrypha and Pseudoepigrapha of the Old Testament. Oxford, 1913. V. 2, p. 420-421.

reign over Israel, Thy servant. And gird him with strength that he may shatter unrighteous rulers, and that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample her down to destruction.[1]

As in practically all the literature of this type, the Messianic hope and prayer spring from desperate political conditions no longer to be borne.

The lawless one laid waste our land so that none inhabited it. They destroyed young and old and their children together. In the heat of his anger he sent them away even unto the west. And (he exposed) the rulers of the land unsparingly to derision.[2]

The King of the house of David (as it was written under the non-Davidic Hasmonean dynasty) will crush the Gentiles, chastise the sinners, cleanse Israel and send the Messiah, the χριστὸς κυριός, the Lord's anointed, the king anointed of the Lord.[3] Here, as in all pre-Christian documents, the chief function of the Messiah is the overthrow of the oppressors, the crushing of the ungodly powers.

But there are also other notes in this literature of woe and hope. While in the main the problem of the time was to rid the nation of foreign oppression, the very familiarity with the omnipresent Gentiles was tending to undermine racial exclusiveness. Literary expression is naturally more conservative than actual life. For faltering and hesitating is the surrender of the literary tradition to life. It surrenders indirectly and incompletely. Sacred to tradition were the curses heaped upon the heads of the Gentiles; profane, secu-

[1] The Assumption of Moses, 10, 4-10. R. H. Charles: The Apocrypha and Pseudoepigrapha of the Old Testament. Oxford, 1913. V. 2, p. 649.
[2] Charles: Apocrypha. Oxford, 1913. V. 2, p. 648.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 650-651. Psalms 18:8, 17:36.

lar and new were the growing familiarity, the enforced intimacy with the Gentile world. This new familiarity could not but affect the traditional and narrow outlook. In some of the popular literature, as, for instance, in "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," salvation is promised not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, who are to be saved through Israel. On the other hand, the conduct of a good Gentile will be the standard by which Israel will be judged by the Lord. "And he shall convict Israel through the chosen Gentiles, as he convicted Esau through the Medianites who loved their brethren." [1]

The apocryphal literature went even farther; in its happier moments it cherished the visions and prophecies of Isaiah of eternal and universal peace and the future brotherhood of mankind. Incidentally how many of the beautiful sentiments in Virgil, in his Georgics and his Eclogues, especially in the fourth, so-called Messianic Eclogue, are copied outright from the Jewish Sybillines, who interpreted to the Greco-Roman world the old visions of Isaiah!

To some Jews of the time the visions of Isaiah were more than prophetic memories and quotations. There on the brink of war, they were benedictions of peace; on the threshold of death they were songs of love and life. Songs of love and life when most hearts were filled with mortal fear. How could fear-oppressed hearts listen to such songs? They could not. Only by hatred greater than their fear could that mortal fear be overcome. Hatred overcame their fear of

[1] Testament of Benjamin, 9:2, 9:10. Charles: Apocrypha. Oxford, 1913. V. 2, p. 358-359.

death, and hastened them into the arms of death. The struggle with Rome meant death. Was there no other way, no other solution?

Desperate was the external situation, desperate the inner pain of souls searching for a way out, instinctively reaching towards light and life. Thus all hope and aspiration were centered in the coming of a Christ whose mission is so wonderfully expressed in Luke: "To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." [1]

[1] Luke 1:79.

CHAPTER V

In the year 70 the national tragedy was consummated. The temple was burned and Jerusalem destroyed; its inhabitants were delivered unto the sword, crucified, sold into slavery and scattered to the four corners of the earth. So long protracted was the tragedy that Jesus' whole life and ministry occurred in the midst of it. The events of life do not come to us named and labeled; neither did Judea's life on the eve of its great historical catastrophe carry banners spelling "tragedy." But even a superficial glance at Jesus' life shows us the imminence of the disaster, and how concretely Jesus' life was bound up with the political destiny of Judea. For was not Jesus born in the days of the tax-enrolment? Did not in all probability the same tax-enrolment start the rebellion of Judas the Gaulonite? Did the battle-cry of Judas, "No tribute to the Romans," ever die out in Jesus' lifetime?

Multitudes followed Jesus. Shall we assume that his message was in no wise related to the paramount interest of the people? What did Jesus mean when he reiterated that he was sent to save the lost sheep of Israel? What did his followers have in mind when they perceived in him their Savior, their Messiah, their Christ? What was Messiah's function, what did the people of the time expect from their Messiah?

They expected their national salvation. What that national salvation meant was clear enough. Luke states it: "That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us." [1] He repeats it a few verses later: "That he would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear." [2]

Now when one talks about national enemies, one is talking about a given historical moment. It was therefore about a given and dreaded historical moment that Christ was speaking when he said:

> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.[3]

And we see clearly a definite historical moment when we read:

> See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.[4]

The inevitable end of the tragedy towards which the children of Israel were so swiftly tending was only too obvious. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." [5] Or as Mark states it:

> But when ye see the abomination of desolation . . . standing where it ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: And let him that

[1] Luke 1:71.
[2] Luke 1:74.
[3] Matthew 23:37.
[4] Matthew 24:2.
[5] Luke 21:20.

is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take anything out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.[1]

I have always found that it takes an enormous amount of learning to get away from the most obvious and simple truth. So our modern theologians are explaining this statement eschatologically; that is, they see in it a prophecy of the end of the world. If it refers to the end of the world what difference does it make whether that end is to come in the winter or in the summer? Such obvious misinterpretation of this text indicates a complete lack of understanding of other texts. For indeed no understanding of the sayings of Christ is at all possible without at least a rudimentary insight into the historical background.

If we do not have before us the clear perspective of events which are inevitably coming unless the nation change its mind, how can we understand the following passage:

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.[2]

Generally speaking, repentance, the Greek *μετανοια*, a change of mind, has to be and can only be individual,

[1] Mark 13:14-18.
[2] Luke 13:1-3.

personal. Yet it is not with an individual, but with a national situation that Jesus was here clearly dealing. The Galilean patriots whom Pilate had slain were not sinners above all sinners; they were average representatives of the nation as a whole. They were a good sample and so was their fate. They perished, and the entire nation will perish if its mind is not changed.

It is true that Christ's clear insight was not shared by his contemporaries. The populace could not see where their Pharisee and Zealot leaders were leading them and what fate they were preparing for themselves. The greater was the sorrow of Jesus; for perdition was in full sight yet hidden from their eyes.

> And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and they shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.[1]

Such texts not only invite examination of the concrete historical background; they actually supply, though in a fragmentary way, the very incidents of the historical situation. Does not the fourth gospel give us *in nuce* a complete insight into the entire situation by telling us what Caiaphas and the chief priests thought? "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." [2] So they decided that it is expedi-

[1] Luke 19:41-44.
[2] John 11:48.

ent "that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." [1]

The primary concern of the Pharisees and priests was also the fate of the nation. The Pharisees could probably have overlooked the heresies in Christ's religious teachings, as they overlooked those of the Sadducees, who denied such traditional canons as the immortality of the soul. The great and fundamental cleavage was constituted by Christ's non-resistance to Rome. Of course they could not use that as an accusation when they were seeking his condemnation at the hands of a Roman procurator, and they had to invent some other charges.

Even the Roman procurator seems to have had an insight into the situation, for he exerted himself to save Christ. According to the account in Luke, Herod, too, whose rule was not of the gentlest, found also no fault with Christ. For while neither of them of course understood Christ, they did understand that he was against rebellion.

And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.[2]

But Pilate could not persuade them, and because of the tumult[3] he did not dare resist them. In so tense

[1] John 11:50.
[2] Luke 23:13-15.
[3] Matthew 27:24.

a situation he feared to provoke an outbreak of the rebellion.

Pilate offered to release Jesus because of the Passover feast. It was the exercise of a customary prerogative.

> And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.[1]

Mark's information about Barabbas is perhaps more specific.

> And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.[2]

Thus Christ was delivered unto his enemies and the rebel leader Barabbas was released. The patriots had won the day. They knew not what they were doing, nor realized that they were sealing the fate of their nation. To Jesus, however, it was quite clear; hence when the women of Jerusalem followed him on the way to Golgotha bewailing and lamenting him he turned to them and said:

> Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.[3]

[1] Luke 23:18-21.
[2] Mark 15:7.
[3] Luke 23:28-31.

CHAPTER VI

THE vision of the inevitable consequences of the brewing rebellion—was it Christ's unique insight, shared by no one? Hardly so. Many intellectuals probably foresaw and feared the outcome, but they felt powerless against the national passion. Interesting as an illustration is what Josephus tells us about himself.

I therefore endeavored to put a stop to these tumultuous persons, and persuaded them to change their minds; and laid before their eyes against whom it was that they were going to fight, and told them that they were inferior to the Romans not only in martial skill, but also in good fortune; and desired them not rashly, and after the most foolish manner, to bring on the dangers of the most terrible mischief upon their country, upon their families, and upon themselves. And this I said with vehement exhortation, because I foresaw that the end of such a war would be most unfortunate to us. But I could not persuade them; for the madness of desperate men was quite too hard for me.[1]

Of course, Josephus realized that in arguing against the rebellion he was provoking the hostility and vengeance of the populace, who indeed might regard him as a traitor.

I was then afraid, lest by inculcating these things so often, I should incur their hatred and their suspicions, as if I were of our enemy's party, and should run into the danger of being seized by them and slain.[2]

[1] Josephus: Life, 4.
[2] Life, 5.

We quote Josephus here not as an individual, but as a representative of a type, to clarify to ourselves the attitude of Jesus. For on the surface may it not seem that Jesus held the same view as Josephus? Jesus, of course, opposed resistance to Rome. Hence does it not seem that they were in agreement toward the all-absorbing problem of the time? It may seem so, but it is not true. If it were true, nothing would have happened. Nothing happened when Josephus was speaking or writing. His writings are a matter of indifference to us and of no consequence. If Jesus had been thinking like Josephus there would have been no teachings of Jesus.

Those who favored non-resistance to Rome could be divided into two main types. One type welcomed and aspired to the universal Roman civilization. Complete assimilation, Greco-Roman culture was their ideal. Jewish national exclusiveness to them was nothing but provincial backwardness. They were an inevitable upper-class provincial phenomenon in the universalization of Rome and the Hellenization of the ancient world. To be a gentleman meant to them to be a Roman. In their hearts they accepted Rome. Their attitude towards religion was, of course, purely formal. There was, therefore, no occasion for any struggle whatsoever. Such a type could, of course, be neither numerous nor influential, but it undoubtedly existed. Rome could not expand politically without universalizing its own civilization, and such assimilation naturally appealed first of all to the upper class.

The other type of non-resistant was undoubtedly

numerous and significant. These were men who knew enough about the world at large to see clearly what resistance to Rome implied and foreboded. They knew that resistance was a physical impossibility and only invited complete destruction and devastation. They did not love Rome because they could not fight; they hated her the more. Their non-resistance was with a glowing eye and a heart full of hate, but with an arm that did not dare to strike. It was a prudent and practical attitude enough, but under the given circumstances it could not stem the tide. Sooner or later it was certain to be swept away by the tide of active resistance.

It could not stem the tide of brave, exalted resistance; it could not still the storm and allay the rising waves, because inwardly it shared their fury. It had no remedy against war, for it was itself latent war, counselling prudence. Prudence—is it really so prudent? Expediency—is it really so practical? Was it a livable life that prudence and expediency were dictating? They were counselling and preparing a life of outward submission and inward rage, a cringing life of stinging defeat with an inevitable outbreak at the end, when the accumulated burden of resentment should become unbearable.

It was all what we call very natural; in other words the solutions and alternatives, whether of rebellion or submission, were of the kind that float on the surface, that are obvious. They were in complete conformity with the age-long popular way of thinking and feeling. They offered but a stereotyped choice, and neither alter-

native contained a single new reaction, whether of thought or of feeling. These reactions, these ideas were so different from those which Jesus taught, that to teach as he did, Jesus must have had quite different inner reactions and experiences. Differing reactions, differing experiences, differing thoughts we reach and obtain only in a life that differs from the ordinary ease with its easy conclusions; in other words, in a life of inner struggle. Only in struggle life lifts itself out from the inherited and habitual grooves of feeling and of thought. In this struggle of Jesus' life, extraordinary insights and unique discoveries were reached, which in a fragmentary way are revealed to us in the gospels.

The problem that led to that inner struggle was neither secret nor precious; it was shouted from the housetops. But Jesus' solution, unlike the solution of Josephus, was unique. Historically considered, the problem was very local. Even from a religious point of view it was a provincial problem; yet Jesus' solution became the most universal achievement in the annals of mankind.

What the problem was historically speaking we know. But how does it present itself to an individual? It presents itself in the form of alternatives. I can not help feeling that the temptations of Jesus are probably parables of alternatives, of political and religious choices. Under this interpretation all the common popular solutions looked to Jesus like temptations of the Devil.

One solution could be expressed something like this:

Here is the holy city; here is the temple of God; and here are God's chosen people—His very own. Can God allow them to perish? Certainly not. Hence even the combat with the entire world, whose name is Rome, can not end but with the victory of God's own and only people.

Cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him . . . Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.[1]

Jesus did not accept the Zealot nationalist solution. There was, of course, an alternative in exactly the opposite direction: to let the Roman civilization supersede Judaism. Let the Jews frankly accept Rome and its culture, let them become Romans; then indeed the entire world will be theirs, and the glory of the Romans will be theirs as well.

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then Jesus saith unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.[2]

Between these two extreme solutions were, of course, many intermediary positions, chief among them the one that had no other aspiration than to live, and to live by bread alone. Such a solution neither sought nor required any religious sanction. But Jesus did.

Jesus was against resistance to Rome; but did he teach that it is expedient to submit, even with hatred in one's heart? Or did he teach:

[1] Matthew 4:6-7. [2] Matthew 4:8-10.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.[1]

Here indeed is quite a different solution of the problem, a solution that came to Jesus on fiery wings of exaltation.

The solution of every problem has some starting point. The starting point for Jesus was clearly the all-absorbing problem of the time. Jesus originally either resented the aggression of Rome, or he did not. If he did not, there was no occasion for any inner exertion. If he did resent, if he felt bitterly about it, what was he to do with himself and his resentment in this crisis? How could a proud spirit justify non-resistance to Rome? A proud spirit could not. But when the proud spirit exhausted itself in the struggle, came humility and acceptance, and with it exaltation embracing heaven and earth. The veil had fallen from the eyes, the simple meaning of the hidden things was revealed, and a new insight was won. With the certainty that only inner experience gives, Jesus could now show the way to the lost sheep of Israel.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.[2]

[1] Matthew 5:43-45.
[2] Matthew 11:28-30.

CHAPTER VII

SEVERAL years before the birth of Christ the Jews petitioned Rome for annexation to the Roman province of Syria, which petition Rome at that time rejected. The petitioners preferred to lose their quasi political independence under a Herodian prince for the sake of maintaining their religious traditions, for the sake of securing a cultural home-rule under a Roman procurator. The fifty Jewish ambassadors and the eight thousand Jews in the city of Rome who petitioned the Emperor were meeting a practical situation. This situation forced them to discount political independence altogether, and hence all that was left to save and safeguard was what had maintained them as a cultural entity throughout the ages—the traditional faith of their fathers.

A generation passed, and a similar problem, a similar alternative presented itself to Jesus; similar, but not identical, for the fullness of time was at hand; and on a wide and crowded road the children of Israel were rushing headlong toward their own perdition. The loud nationalist call to rebellion, the fervent hope for a Messiah, God's anointed leader and the redeemer of Israel, stirred the deepest emotions that human breasts could hold. Here was not a time for greater prudence, the time had come for the greater passions.

When Christ in ecstatic humility accepted submission to Rome, with that acceptance went as compensation the highest conceivable type of national consolation. Of course, it was not a material consolation for which the multitudes were looking, the great consolation was of a spiritual nature. The essence of this consolation was not wholly a stranger in the ideological literature of the nation. In the non-canonic literature of the time one finds many intimations of the universal mission of Zion; and in the canonic scriptures the noblest expression of this idea in the famous lines of Isaiah:

> And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.[1]

Of course, Isaiah's Zion is judging, Jesus' Zion is saving. Still in Isaiah is an indication of Christ's consolation for the children of Israel. Though they were losing their political independence, how trifling it is in the light of their universal calling. They were indeed to be God's chosen people, God's light in a world of darkness; "for salvation is of the Jews." [2]

[1] Isaiah 2:2-4.
[2] John 4:22.

Now let us turn to the gospels, to the opening passage in the Sermon on the Mount, and consider it not from a religious but from a historical viewpoint. It begins with blessings upon the humble: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn:" (I dare say one mourns the loss of one's national independence) "for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." [1] Of course, humility, mourning (which means accepting the will of God as Job did; the Jews still in personal mourning recite the book of Job) meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, are all spiritual terms; and to inherit the earth means but a spiritual inheritance. Therein is the consolation. This is further clarified in the passage beginning, "Ye are the salt of the earth." Clearly it is not addressed to the world at large, for then there would have been no earth left, only salt. It might have been said in other words, You are the chosen people, but for what were you chosen? Chosen to carry to the world a spiritual message. If you have no spiritual message for the world what are you good for?

> But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it [the earth] be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.[2]

The same idea only with different imagery is carried out in the following verses:

> Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a

[1] Matthew 5:3-5.
[2] Matthew 5:13.

bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.[1]

Christ says your Father, not their father, because he is addressing the chosen people as the children of God, who have a spiritual mission to perform.

So far as the law and prophets are concerned there is no infringement upon them in the Sermon on the Mount. It was not less piety or less righteousness that Jesus preached.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.[2]

Why then do we find in the Beatitudes this passage?

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.[3]

Are the public hatred and persecution here referred to due to contemporary religious bigotry, religious intolerance, which could not listen to a more spiritual interpretation without violence? Were the people and their leaders so intolerant of greater religious fervor or greater liberalism than their own little minds by chance were capable of? What little we know about actual conditions and circumstances of the time would hardly support such a view. The circumstances forced a very unusual degree of religious toleration.

First of all, the Sadducees and Pharisees had to learn to get along and worship in the same temple.

[1] Matthew 5:14-16.
[2] Matthew 5:17.
[3] Matthew 5:10-11.

Secondly, nobody seemed to disturb the "sinners," that is, the outright and outspoken religious liberals. The differences between the Sadducees and the Pharisees must have been tremendous. We are told that the Talmud places the Sadducees on a level with the Samaritans.[1] The Sadducees did not accept the rabbinic traditional interpretations of the Bible. The Pharisees, on the other hand, regarded it as "more culpable to teach contrary to the precepts of the scribes than contrary to the Torah itself." [2] Still more drastic is the difference between the sects in their attitude toward immortality. The idea of resurrection or immortality of the soul was completely rejected by the Sadducees. Great as were their differences of viewpoint, these varying sects did not persecute each other.

Why then should Jesus assume that his followers will be reviled and persecuted? Is it because of the Christhood of Jesus? But did not his own people in Nazareth try to kill him before he acknowledged his Christhood? One does not need to look very far to find the reason for the antagonism to Jesus. Was it not he who in the midst of the brewing rebellion was teaching:

> That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.[3]

[1] Nidda IV, 2. "The daughters of the Zaddukim are, if they walk in the ways of their fathers, equal to Samaritan women. If they walk openly in the ways of Israel, they are equal to Israelitish women. R. Joses says: They are looked upon as Israelitish women, unless it is proved that they walk in the ways of their fathers."—Quoted in Schürer's History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ. Second Division, v. 2 (English translation), p. 8.

[2] Sanhedrin 11, 3.—Schürer, *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[3] Matthew 5:39.

It was Jesus who was teaching:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.[1]

Under the circumstances, therefore, those who understood and followed Jesus were certain of meeting violent antagonism from a people that was on the eve of rebellion and disaster. Political passions were, of course, clothed in traditional religious terms. Messianic hopes in no wise changed the tribal traditional morality of the people: such hopes rather enhanced it. What then could save the people? Only that great spiritual experience, the passionate and humble submission to the will of God; only a rebirth in spirit could save them from their traditional reactions. Without this new glowing spirit, the old tribal morality, the standards of flesh were sure to prevail.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.[2]

The Zealot movement as such was of relatively recent origin, but was linked to the most ancient traditions: tribal morality and religious orthodoxy. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, no matter how genuinely devout and pious it may be, is in its very nature a historical, inherited, traditional formulation and observance. In the historical moment that we are dealing with only a religious fervor of so passionate a nature that it could overcome traditions and habits and all the emotions aroused by the day, only such fervor could

[1] Matthew 5:44.
[2] John 3:3.

save the people from perdition. The call was, therefore, for a greater ruling religious passion, a passion of which clearly not everybody was capable. Only a part of the nation at best could free itself from the traditional nationalistic reactions, from the traditional habits and the traditional viewpoint.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.[1]

Did the Zealots ever try to save their lives? For the God of their fathers and the freedom of their country they would unflinchingly sacrifice not only their own lives, but the lives of all who were dear to them. What doubt could there be how they were bound to view the teaching of Christ even if their own brother, their own child should profess it?

And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.[2]

He to whom the ties of life, the ties of old were too strong—he really could not be Jesus' disciple. Hence the extraordinary text:

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.[3]

It was the call for a religious revival. The very call for repentance was nothing else. Love God, your Father, with all your heart and all your soul. Submit

[1] Matthew 10:35-36.
[2] Matthew 10:21.
[3] Luke 14:26.

gladly to His will. Pray that not your will but His be done here on earth as in heaven. That is all. This simple call for a spiritual revival was, however, offensive to the prevailing political sentiment as well as to organized religion. The inevitable situation developed. All worship of God is the product of a religious organization with its teachings, formulas, observances, rituals, and traditions of the elders. An organization, even to maintain a spiritual entity, is in its very nature a physical, material instrument, whose object is to provide the many with at least a minimum of spirituality. But when the day came when not a minimum but a maximum of possible human spirituality was called for, then indeed all the traditional trappings of the old organization conflicted with the very object for which they had been created. The vehicles of a religion were too heavy to permit any soaring of the spirit. Yet without such new spiritual content, without a newly felt relationship to their heavenly father, without a universal mission, there was no consolation left for those who were about to perish.

CHAPTER VIII

WERE the reactions of so unique a religious personality only emotional, or did Jesus have also a unique intellectual insight? There is no question in my mind that Christ's deep conviction that his is the Way and the Truth was based on knowledge, intellectual knowledge, scientific knowledge if you please. Before he felt that he was the Redeemer, he knew himself to be the great Discoverer. Of course, this is a modern mode of expression. We in the twentieth century talk and think of *our* discoveries, of *our* personal achievements; but to Jesus a concrete and self-evident intellectual insight was a gift of God. Truth could only come from the source of all truth; from the Father that is in heaven.

Is the complete revelation of Christ's intellectual discoveries in the gospels? Could it be there? What are the gospels? At a certain time, Christ taught. Multitudes were gathered around. He talked to them and answered questions. His sayings on these occasions were remembered, sometimes possibly verbally, sometimes inaccurately. At different times after Christ, these sayings were gathered and edited. To them were added records of his deeds, of his healing, and other material which human memory and tradition associated with Christ. Christ did not write a philo-

sophical treatise about his knowledge of life and of God.

Take any contemporary example. Let us assume that a great Christian philosopher and thinker, for example Tolstoi, on the basis of his insight into what he considers truth, is trying to teach his fellow men, as Tolstoi actually did. But now let us assume that all his literary and religious writings were not written, but that the only records left to us were his pedagogical efforts, his little tales and stories for the peasants (which, incidentally, I believe have never been translated out of Russian). All his little tales for the education and spiritual uplift of the peasant are based on a rather profound and complex intellectual insight. But you could hardly expect to find dissertations on philosophy in stories written for the poor, ignorant peasants of Russia. Yet I venture to say, were all the works of Tolstoi destroyed and only these simple folk-tales left, that it would take a very naïve scholar not to see the intellectual and religious system that lies behind these tales written for poor, degraded toilers of the soil.

This is a hypothetical example. We are actually infinitely better off with the gospels. True, they are largely teachings of conduct. True, they are sayings addressed to men and women from whom much could not be expected intellectually. True, there is no attempt at a philosophical and theological dissertation; and yet there was no need for followers of Christ to go to an Aristotle for philosophy. For a greater than Aristotle is there in the very sayings as they have been recorded and have come down to us in the gospels.

What is a philosopher? A lover of wisdom it means philologically. And what is wisdom? A relative insight into truth, very relative indeed. What then shall we call Christ, who knew that he had not a relative but an absolute insight? Moreover, use all your modern little scientific standards, and you cannot get away from the fact that Christ's insight was one which future generations may rediscover but can never upset.

Is it, therefore, surprising that Christ knew quite well that he was wiser than Solomon?

> The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.[1]

What that great revelation was we will discuss presently. And it is for this insight that the great thanksgiving was rendered by Christ, probably approximately expressed in Luke:

> I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.[2] . . . For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.[3]

It is because back of all the teaching was an insight that carried with it complete conviction of self-evident truth that Jesus taught "as one having authority, and not as the scribes," [4] and that Jesus could say to Nicodemus:

[1] Matthew 12:42.
[2] Luke 10:21.
[3] Luke 10:24.
[4] Matthew 7:29.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.[1]

What is it that Jesus knew, and what is it that he had seen in his own experience, that was hidden from the kings and prophets? It is condensed in a very brief formula—The kingdom of heaven is in us. This formulation, however, may be likened to the summit of a mountain. The entire broad base, the vast expanse of the mountain's height and breadth support and lead up to the peak. That mountain peak is but the crowning glory of the mountain's vastness, a vastness of insight based on experience. Christ was speaking of what he knew, of what he had seen. What did he see, what did he experience? All that he experienced we do not know; but an outline here and there suggests its depth and indicates its bulk.

From our historical analysis of the situation it becomes quite evident that Jesus had to resent deeply the loss of Jewish national independence and the aggression of Rome. Had he not resented it there would have been no cause for his fervent humility and acceptance. The fervor and ultimate depth of the reconciliation leave under the given historical circumstances no doubt as to the character of the struggle which preceded it. What happened? National humiliation was hurting and burning. The balm for that burning humiliation was humility. For humility cannot be humiliated. Did humility change the outside world? Not in the least. Only an inward change took place; yet that inward change completely altered the

[1] John 3:11.

so-called facts of life and of existence. Thus he asked his people to learn from him,

> For I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.[1]

Parallel with the great emotion was the intellectual insight, that what counts in life and constitutes life is the inner reaction; and that so-called outward facts to which we have no inner reactions are not part of our life. The outward world is our world only in so far as *we* react to it. Great may be the bulk of yonder distant star; and in the scheme of the universe its significance may be greater than that of our little planet. But in our life its bulk and gravity count for little; for to our reactions it is but one of innumerable little stars which in no wise affect our lives. The same, of course, is true about things nearer home. In so far as we do not react towards some phenomena of life those phenomena do not exist for us. It is our reaction, our attitude that so far as we are concerned gives to any phenomenon its place and meaning in our life. It is, therefore, with the inner attitude which determines our reactions and thus regulates all the events of our lives that Christ was dealing. Christ was illustrating this viewpoint of his when he said:

> The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness![2]

You can see that Christ is fully conscious of this principle, and expresses it, we may say formulates it

[1] Matthew 11:29-30.
[2] Matthew 6:22-23.

intellectually, in connection with many cures which are reported in the gospels. I am talking about the miraculous cures. Christ's attitude toward miracles in general can be seen in the so-called temptations in the desert. You know what he thought of the Pharisees when they asked him for a sign in heaven. He considered a generation that wants a sign "a wicked and adulterous generation"; for, of course, all such signs would have been outward forces and hence meaningless. On the other hand, see what he says to the people who come to him afflicted with bodily ills. We have a statement in Matthew:

> And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.[1]

Here are two blind men praying him to heal them. He asks them whether they think he can do so; that is, whether they have such inner faith. Then all that he tells them is, "According to your faith be it unto you." In the same chapter you will find a woman who insisted on touching the garment of Christ. She was cured of her ailment. She did not even ask Christ to cure her, but she had an inner faith. Christ became aware of the cure only *post facto*. He tells her, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."[2] On another occasion he is again confronted by a blind man. Again he cures him and says to him, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."[3] A similar formula you will find in other cases.[4]

[1] Matthew 9:28-29.
[2] Matthew 9:22.
[3] Mark 10:52.
[4] Luke 17:19, 18:42.

We also know, on the other hand, that in many cities, like Nazareth and other places where people did not believe in Jesus, he could not perform any miracles. These miracles, therefore, and Christ was quite conscious of it, were acts of faith, inner acts of the afflicted. True enough, the children of Israel, without any faith in him, in fact with doubt instead of faith, wanted from him some miraculous signs in heaven to prove his Christhood. Such signs, of course, were not given.

The record of one of these cures links the cure with forgiveness of sin, which is intellectually very interesting and exciting. It shows how highly systematized was Christ's intellectual insight. It cannot be a mere chance interpolation of the editor of the gospels. Do you remember the case of the man sick of the palsy?[1] This man had faith in Christ and wanted to be cured. Christ says to him, "Thy sins are forgiven," and the Pharisees wonder who the man can be who has power to forgive sins. But Christ identifies his healing and his forgiving sins in the statement, "Whether it is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?" He identifies the two acts because

[1] Luke 5:18-23. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether it is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

both the cure and the forgiveness of sin are made possible by the inner act of the man himself. This becomes even more evident in the case of the woman who loved much. Here are the verses:

> And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.[1]

Now, perhaps, we understand why Christ tried to explain and elucidate his own acts to the scribes and Pharisees by the acts of John the Baptist.

> The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?[2]

The three synoptic gospels have obviously one source for the record of this conversation, and the wording of this source seems rather ambiguous. It looks as if Christ refused to explain to the Pharisees the character of his authority, or tried to put the Pharisees in the difficult position of having either to accept or deny the authority of John. As a matter of fact, that conversation is marvellous in its explicitness, and again it shows how systematic and thought out is the insight of Christ. What was John the Baptist doing? He denied that he was Christ, he did not even acknowledge himself as a prophet. He called himself "a voice crying in the wilderness," and described his mission as to make the path straight for him that was to come. Yet John was remitting sins, for baptism was a token of the remission of sins. Now, did John discriminate among the people who came to him to be baptized?

[1] Luke 7:48-50. [2] Matthew 21:25.

Did he refuse baptism or remission of sin to any one? He did not. If they repented and changed their attitude and were yearning for remission of their sins, they were baptized. A change of mind has already taken place; in their repentance was the remission of their sins. Publicans and harlots repented and their sins were forgiven, the baptism was but a token thereof.

It was difficult for the Pharisees to understand it. Religion to them was largely a matter of outward regulation, the ultimate significance of the inner attitude was incomprehensible to them. If they lived up to all their religious regulations they had consciousness but of their piety and righteousness. They had no yearning for spiritual rebirth, and nothing could be done for them. They were cleansing and polishing the outside of the cup.

We know that the Jews expected God to send their deliverer, and expected that with him a new rule would begin, by a ruler sent from God himself—the kingdom of heaven. So far, therefore, as the masses are concerned, the deliverance of the Jews and the kingdom of heaven were acts of God, external acts. I daresay they would have expected the kingdom to be inaugurated by signal victories over the Gentiles, by God's judgment and chastisement of publicans and sinners, and what not.

All this from the viewpoint of Christ's intellectual insight was futile nonsense; for no external act could solve this or any other situation. One could not enter into the kingdom of heaven without a rebirth in spirit.

It was only through a rebirth in spirit that one could enter therein. The kingdom of heaven was but an inner change in us. True enough, the inner spiritual change may be gradual. It may be like the plant that grows from a tiny mustard seed. It may be like a leaven, which raises the loaf gradually. But the leavening and the growth are inner acts, not outward manifestations. Was it not a completely different concept from the one which then prevailed? Indeed it was. And that is why Christ told the Jews that they knew neither the Father nor the Son:

Ye neither know me nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.[1]

According to the popular conception, Christ was to inaugurate the kingdom of heaven. Christ was to save the lost sheep of Israel, to save them in the last moment from impending destruction. Now Jesus knew quite well that his way was not simply one way to save the children of Israel, but the one and only way. That way was to instruct them in the kingdom of heaven. Thus Christhood, the kingdom of heaven, and the salvation of Israel remain linked together, as in the popular concept. But in Jesus' concept there appears this difference: that Christhood and the salvation of Israel and the kingdom of heaven postulated the spiritual rebirth of the people.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom

[1] John 8:19.

of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.[1]

But the Pharisees could neither enter into that kingdom themselves nor could they suffer others to enter therein.

[1] Luke 17:20-21.

CHAPTER IX

ACCORDING to Josephus, John the Baptist was put to death for purely political reasons. He tells us:

> Now when many came in crowds about him, for they were greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause; and not bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late.[1]

John the Baptist, therefore, according to the very plausible testimony of Josephus, was put to death for political reasons. What did John the Baptist do? He announced the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah, in the general and universal understanding of the time, was to be the deliverer of the Jews from Roman oppression. Herod, who had received his appointment as tetrarch of Galilee from Rome, was but an administrative instrument of his Roman sovereign. To him the coming of Christ could mean nothing but rebellion against Rome, under a leadership which the people would acclaim as divine. Whatever may have been the flavor of John's religious and moral preachings, to Herod he was but the herald of a revolution, with great moral power over the people, who came to him in multitudes. Since the fate of the Herodians was

[1] Josephus: Antiquities, XVIII, 5, 2.

tied up with the power of Rome, Herod put the precursor of what looked to him like the coming revolution, to death. To the Jewish populace, the Christ was the deliverer who was to come to deliver them from foreign rule and oppression. To a Herod or a Pilate, or any Roman administrative agent, the Christ who was to come was the leader of the expected rebellion. For what looked to the so-called Jewish patriot like deliverance, of course, meant rebellion to the forces of Rome.

John was put to death by Herod for announcing the coming of the Christ. Yet when Pontius Pilate sent that very Christ to Herod, Herod did not put him to death, but sent him back to Pilate; and neither Pilate nor Herod could find any fault with him. The Jews, on the other hand, who were praying so fervently for the coming of the Christ, sought from Pilate Jesus' execution and the deliverance of the rebel leader, Barabbas.

These historical episodes throw light on the wide gulf between the two concepts of Christhood; that of the populace, and that of Jesus. The concept of the populace was a heavensent king of the house of David, with a supernatural sword in his hand, ruling, judging and avenging. Very different was Jesus' concept of his Christhood.

A very large number of the plain people believed in Jesus. They saw before them a personality whose like they had never seen before. They believed him to be the one who was to come; that is, the Christ that they expected, whose functions and attributes

were those popularly attributed to the coming Messiah. Even Christ's own disciple, Simon Peter, who according to the gospels first acknowledged him to be the Christ, even he seems to have understood Christhood in quite a different sense from that of Jesus, and, in all probability, in the ordinary sense of the people. The way Christ took it is described:

But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.[1]

The popular interpretation of Christhood and the popular faith in Jesus as the Messiah are also indicated by Jesus' having to hide himself in a mountain lest the populace should by force make him king.

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.[2]

There is little doubt that so great an impression was made by Jesus upon his day and generation that had he wanted to be a king and lead his people as the Messiah they expected should have done, he would have been joyfully acclaimed throughout Judea. Yet Jesus chose and had to choose the cross. Why did he have to reject the throne? Why did he have to choose a cross? Why did he have to change the definite meaning that so concrete a word as Christ or Messiah had in his time? It could be answered by quoting John:

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.[3]

[1] Matthew 16:23.
[2] John 6:15.
[3] John 12:46.

This is an answer; but let me give one less subtle, more concrete.

It has been indicated in the foreword to this study, I believe, that our attempt here is neither theological nor philosophical, but an attempt at historical understanding. Understanding, however, is not a vain repetition of many words and enumeration of various parts of something. It is an understanding of the inner cohesion of these parts, that gives them an entity and intellectual unity. To me personally it seems childish not to see in Christ's teachings an overwhelming intellectual system. The towering parts that are its components are parts of the same system, not independent units. The truth of the insight, the cohesion of the system were self-evident to Christ; so much so that he knew that they had an absolute quality; that is, coming from God. Because of the systematic nature of the insight, the conclusions drawn were inevitable and mandatory.

Just so inevitable was a revision of the concept of Christhood. Had all the popular functions of Christhood been excluded from Jesus' concept, then indeed Jesus would have simply brushed away the entire concept. He would have said, "No, I am not he that is to come," or "He will come," or he would have said, "Indeed he never will come." But the primary and elementary function of the Christ that was to come was what? The saving of the Jews, was it not? Jesus knew quite well that the only thing that could possibly save them was his insight, as expressed in his teachings. He, therefore, completely fulfilled

the fundamental meaning of Christhood. No one but himself, moreover, could possibly fulfill it. That he considered it his primary function is shown in the way he commanded his disciples:

> These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.[1]

While he was instructing his people into the kingdom of heaven, leading them to a spiritual rebirth, Jesus nevertheless kept constantly before them the pragmatic importance of his teachings, which could save them from imminent destruction. He does not hesitate to show the plain people that the very political and social situation, that is, the times in which they were living, demanded from them a changed attitude of mind unless they were to perish; though, of course, it would have been preferable that they change their attitude, not because of the existing political situation, but because it was right that they should. So for instance we find in Luke these sayings:

> And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?[2]

But they really could not judge what was right, for their minds were filled with the conglomeration of

[1] Matthew 10: 5-6.
[2] Luke 12:54-57.

popular ideas in which the coming of Christ and his kingdom, the salvation of Israel, the tribute to Cæsar, and endless other religious and secular ideas of the time were all mixed up and intertwined.

The popular current concepts presented a curious mixture of things religious and things political, of things natural and supernatural. They were products of an emotional panic which was hysterically fusing and confusing things. In the Messianic, apocalyptic and eschatological literature of the time the world was to come to an end; but what really did come to an end in that literature was the last shred of thinking capacity and common sense. In Christ, on the other hand, in his teachings, his ministry, entirely apart from any of his other functions or qualities, the one thing that stands out monumentally is his intellectual grandeur, and the purity and unswerving consistency of its simple straight lines. The continuation of a straight line excludes doubt as to its direction. The line of Jesus' intellectual insight had to lead to a recasting of the concept of Christhood, no matter how widely the concept he arrived at might vary from the confused and uncertain one which prevailed.

The two salient points common and fundamental to all prevailing concepts of the Messiah were the salvation of Israel and the inauguration of the kingdom. Since the kingdom could only be within the souls of men, since salvation of Israel from immediate destruction was dependent on the humility and nonresistance which would accompany a spiritual rebirth, Jesus knew that he was *the* Christ, and that any other

Christ who might arise, a Christ who would be a popular leader, was bound to be a false Christ. It was equally self-evident that the Messiah of the popular imagination, the man on horseback, of the conquering hero type, could accomplish nothing but destruction. He could accomplish nothing because the only conquest required for entrance into the kingdom of heaven was an inner conquest. Even if material conflict should be crowned with victory, what would such victories of the flesh avail? How could the Messiah of the popular imagination lead the Jews to a rebirth of the spirit, and to the gates of the kingdom that is within us and that cometh not with observation? How could men possibly enter into the kingdom, supposing some external changes to take place, if they themselves remained unchanged? But if our entrance into the kingdom is entirely a matter of changing our own attitude, of our own rebirth, what else could Christ be but a light to those that sit in darkness, and their minister?

"Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.[1]

All the ideas of Jesus were correlated; they were closely fitted parts of one great intellectual concept, and all of the same spirit, a different spirit from the one prevailing.

[1] Mark 10:42-45.

There can be no doubt that many, very many believed in him; but how many understood him? Certainly very few. The gospels themselves as they come to us testify to the lack of understanding even among the disciples. So we are told:

And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.[1]

The great trouble was that Christ was teaching an insight, preaching ideas, while the people could only understand things. So, for instance, even so simple a metaphor as "the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" was understood literally and materially.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?[2]

You will find any number of references in the gospels to this lack of understanding. Some are even humorous; for Jesus, of course, could not help seeing that they were hopelessly mixing his teachings with the old traditional ideas.

Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.[3]

The scribes had difficulty in grasping the meaning of Jesus' message; but was it any easier for those who were not scribes? To illustrate and illuminate his

[1] Luke 18:34.
[2] Mark 8:16-18.
[3] Matthew 13:52.

teachings Christ used parables, but they did not help very much.

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.[1]

And yet there is no doubt that multitudes believed in him, and that faith did wonders for them. The more reason is it for us to ask ourselves, Why was not their faith abiding? Why was it that the multitudes who greeted him with "Hosanna," the very same, perhaps, cried but a few days later, "Crucify him"? Why was it that Jesus knew that he must be rejected by his generation and suffer many things in Jerusalem? And not only Jesus knew it, but his brethren, who did not believe in him, taunted him, and asked him why he was not going to Jerusalem.

Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.[2]

Let us try to confront the situation, and find ourselves in it. Jesus might have been followed and grasped in one of two ways: first, his teachings might have been understood, believed in, and followed with

[1] Matthew 13:13-15.
[2] John 7:6-8.

abiding conviction because of that understanding. Certainly he laid emphasis on understanding, and pointed out that

> When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, *and understandeth it not,* then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside.[1] . . . But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, *and understandeth it;* which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth; some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.[2]

The alternative possibility is that the teachings might not have been intellectually understood, but that Jesus might have been felt and grasped emotionally, and followed because of the people's faith in him. Have we any definite evidence that Christ's unified intellectual insight was understood and mentally grasped? After nineteen hundred years of all kinds of theology, philosophy and science, we can understand it to-day. Whatever one may think of our intellectual achievements, be they profound or not, it is fair, I believe, to say that we at least can grasp an intellectual insight if it is laid before us; thus science and philosophy have really paved the way to an understanding of Christ. But I frankly fail to see how in Christ's generation, in Judea and by the shore of Galilee, there could be many who would understand him. The political emotional elements in the situation would also have worked against a sympathetic understanding, for all that the scribes could understand and did understand was that if men should truly be-

[1] Matthew 13:19.
[2] Matthew 13:23.

lieve in him, then "The Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." [1] There was altogether too tremendous a difference in the intellectual level; and I cannot see how an intellectual understanding of Christ was at all possible.

Quite different is it with faith, and it may well be observed that so-called intellectual understanding does play a rôle only in the history of so-called ideas; that is, understanding plays a rôle in the history of understanding—a trite enough observation. It plays an infinitely small rôle in the history of mankind. Mankind and understanding are two different things. You perhaps witness from time to time great commotions in the name of ideas. It was so in the past, is perhaps so in the present. Do not think for a moment that it is understanding of the ideas which moves mankind; it is their faith in the ideas. This is true about the so-called masses, it is true about so-called intellectuals; when at certain times numbers of persons call themselves positivists, Kantians, Hegelians, Marxists, all you will find there is sincere and really powerful faith in the concepts of Comte or Kant or Hegel or Marx. That faith is clothed (because it is so scientific, because it is after the fall of Adam and no longer in a state of innocence) it has to be clothed in phrases and excerpts—rags of the believers' particular master. So it is with faith; and as it is, so it was, and so perhaps it will be. But there are certain fundamental conditions, subject not to faith but to understanding, that at a given time determine the general

[1] John 11:48.

characteristics of a prevailing faith. The faith that had to prevail in the generation of Jesus was a faith in Christ, *their* Christ, *their* Messiah. And they believed in Jesus.

But here was a fatal tragedy involved in that very faith; for one concept was the concept of the Messiah of Jesus' generation, and different, as we pointed out, was Jesus' concept of his own Christhood. If the insight of Jesus could have been intellectually grasped, they could and would inevitably have come to that concept of Christhood that Jesus taught. But the Messiah was too definite a concept of faith to be modified without a sign in heaven. Multitudes believed in Jesus; and the whole of Galilee and Judea would have been swept by Jesus, could he have been the king and the Messiah of their faith. For whenever they believed in him, they believed in him *as their* Messiah, their anointed king. "Hosanna, blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." [1] They believed in him, but they believed in him with *their* faith, not with *his* faith. How could they modify so deeply ingrained a concept of faith, and a concept of deliverance that the political situation seemed to them so concretely to demand? Where intellectual understanding was lacking, nothing short of a sign in heaven, an intervention by God himself, could modify their faith. And in this respect, if we come to think of it, we must remember that even the faith of the early Christian community after the death of Jesus was based first upon a sign in heaven, the resur-

[1] John 12:13.

rection. Nor was the current faith in the Messiah so drastically changed, for he was to come again and reign in glory. Even after the resurrection the "Acts" are reporting the old primary concern:

> When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?[1]

Jesus knew that he had to be rejected by his generation. And the Pharisees knew just how to shatter the faith in Jesus as the Messiah. For indeed all they had to ask him was the question whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. The Messiah that was to deliver the children of Israel from the Cæsars and all oppression, that Messiah could not command them to pay the tribute. But Jesus, who came to deliver them from themselves and from their imminent destruction, of course, had to tell them to recognize the fact that on their tribute money were the name and the superscription of Cæsar, hence to render unto Cæsar what was Cæsar's, but to give unto God what was God's.

Jesus had to be rejected by his generation, and he knew it. If he was to be rejected by his generation and suffer for the truth to which he came to bear witness, then indeed he could not save the lost sheep of Israel from their imminent destruction. Rejected by his generation and not understood by his people, of what avail was his instruction into the kingdom? Will not the people to whom he ministered after all

[1] Acts 1:6.

be the very last to enter the kingdom, if indeed they are to enter therein at all? Will not his very disciples be offended and deny him, when he, instead of reigning in power, is apprehended like a malefactor and suffers at the hands of his enemies? And true enough, when he was apprehended as a malefactor, then the disciples forsook him and fled.[1] They were offended, they forsook him, for neither was his kingdom of this earth, nor was there any heavenly intervention in his behalf. If there had been, his enemies would have believed in him as well. Did not the priests and scribes say,

> Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.[2]

Thus Christ had to experience a greater passion than the physical one.

It is generally said that human passions are blind, blind to causes, conditions, consequences; blind, that is, having no insight into more general conditions of existence. And because it is so, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." [3] On the other hand, to every historical moment, transient as it is, its momentary passions are by far more absorbing and exciting than a general insight, if ever so true, into life. These passions of the moment have naturally enough their spokesmen. More universal viewpoints may also have their spokesmen. But in a conflict between the moment and eternity, which is it that is going immediately to conquer? Unquestionably the moment;

[1] Matthew 26:56.
[2] Mark 15:32.
[3] Matthew 15:14.

for it is the moment that is passionate, blind and aggressive. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee."[1] Of course Jerusalem killeth her prophets. For what is a prophet? If he is a true prophet, is he not so because of his insight into life in general and into the inevitable consequences of our momentary passionate actions? Then because of this very insight he can never qualify as a popular leader, the hero of the passing moment. Popularity is hardly the rôle of a true prophet. Therefore Christ says:

Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did your fathers unto the false prophets.[2]

The greater a general insight is the more it is at variance with the vociferous passions of the moment. Now, when we come to the insight that Christ taught, it was so universal that it was not even understood by the moment. Only its points of variance were felt and resented by an aroused nation on the eve of its rebellion and its destruction. And Christ was crucified.

The kingdom was to be within us. The kingdom was a matter of attitude and of understanding. But the kingdom was also after all like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of seeds, but which grows in time.

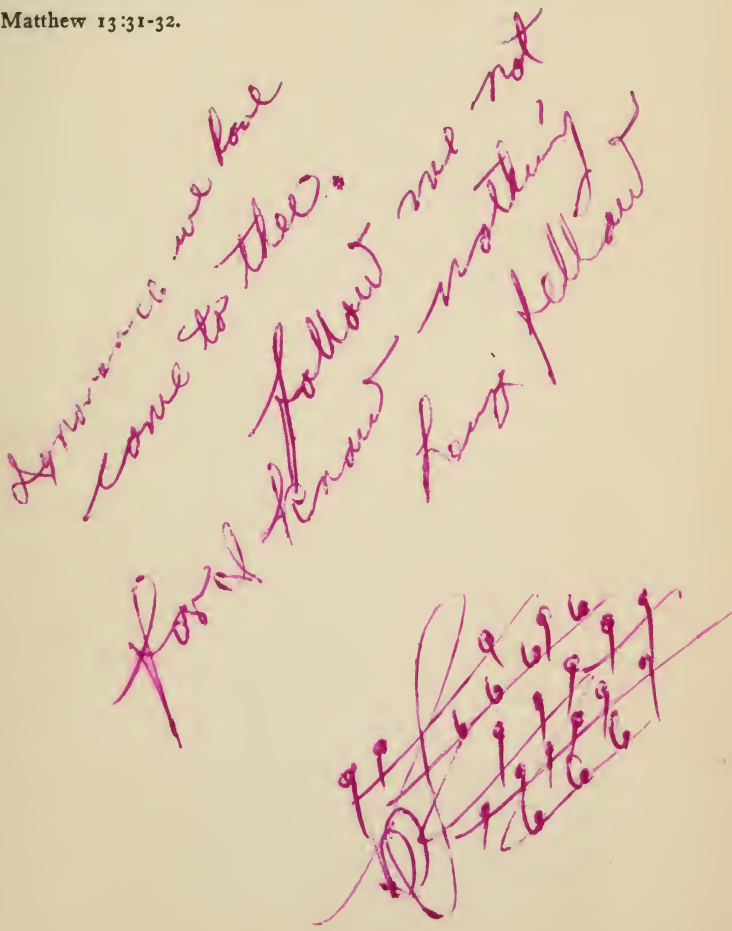
Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh

[1] Matthew 23:37.
[2] Luke 6:25.

a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.[1]

And so after all is human assimilation of all knowledge, and all insight. It is a matter of slow growth.

[1] Matthew 13:31-32.



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